



Policy 03

CREEK RESTORATION AND CHANNEL MAINTENANCE

The City of Knoxville offers a public service to assist property owners with a limited amount of maintenance for creeks and drainage channels. The City of Knoxville has a dedicated full-time field crew (Creek Cleanup Crew) to help maintain and restore the major creeks and other urban drainage channels.

The ultimate responsibility for all maintenance of creeks and drainage channels will remain with the property owner. If there is a drainage easement, the maintenance responsibility still remains with the property owner, even if the City of Knoxville has historically maintained the drainage channel for the clearly defined general public welfare. Drainage channels shall include (but are not limited to) natural drainage ditches, manmade drainage ditches, swales, creeks, streams, dry creek beds and open culverts.

The Creek Cleanup Crew is usually dedicated to inspecting the creeks and drainage channels on a regular basis. Routine maintenance, such as litter and debris removal, is performed as the crew progresses. Although most of the work is done by hand, larger items may need to be removed with special equipment. Blockages will be removed, and very minor grading can be performed as needed to restore channel conveyance.

The Creek Cleanup Crew will also try to maintain or improve the amount of shade provided by large trees along stream reaches. Natural snags and other obstructions that cause pool areas are generally not removed if channel conveyance is not affected. Special problem sites are noted, with recommendations for work orders outside of the routine schedule. In general, the crew does not perform clearing or mowing of streambank areas and other riparian zones. This practice is highly discouraged by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) to prevent grass and leaves from entering the creeks.

The Creek Cleanup Crew is instructed to report incidences of illicit discharges and improper disposal to the Stormwater Quality Hotline for further investigation. This may include: trash and debris, discharge of liquids through culverts or pipes, grass and leaves in the creek, food and organic nutrients in the creek, etc. See AM-01 and IC-01 of the Knoxville BMP Manual for more guidance on non-stormwater discharges and a quick-reference table for disposal alternatives.

The City of Knoxville helps to support the “Adopt-A-Stream” program, which is now coordinated by the Water Quality Forum (www.waterqualityforum.org). A group of volunteers can adopt a section (typical unit = ¼ mile but varies widely) to periodically pickup trash and debris along stream and creek reaches. The volunteers sign up through the Water Quality Forum, receive training and supplies, and are recognized by posted Adopt-A-Stream signs. Each group of volunteers will be supported by the local government with jurisdiction over the particular stream reach, and the local government (Knox County, City of Knoxville, Town of Farragut) will provide trash bags, trash pickup and other supplies as needed. The volunteers are encouraged to note field conditions and stream quality, and to also report locations of large debris for future removal by the Creek Cleanup Crew. Volunteers may also support other types of community projects such as streambank stabilization, storm drain stenciling, or habitat enhancements by contacting the Water Quality Forum or the Knoxville Stormwater Engineering Division.